



## LAW ENFORCEMENT AGAINST PROHIBITION

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Written Testimony of Paul Steigleder, LEAP  
before the Senate Judiciary Committee  
in favor of Senate Bill 839

Good Morning Chair Prozanski, Vice-Chair Kruse, and Members of the Committee,

I am Paul Steigleder and I am here today to express my support for Senate Bill 839, a Good Samaritan law addressing drug-related overdose deaths. My law enforcement career spanned three decades, including 2 years as a police officer in Sitka, Alaska and 28 years at the Clackamas County Sheriff's Office, holding the rank of sergeant and lieutenant. I worked on anti-drug education in schools and oversaw hundreds of drug-related search warrants and small-time drug arrests. I also served for more than ten years as a drug recognition expert, working with individuals in legal trouble due to drug addiction. As a supervisor I responded to numerous drug-related overdoses, some of which ended in the loss of a life.

I am speaking today on behalf of myself and as a representative of LEAP (Law Enforcement Against Prohibition). LEAP envisions a world in which drug policies work for the benefit of society and keep our communities safer: a system that better protects human rights, reduces crime and disease, treats drug abusers as patients, reduces addiction, and restores the public's respect and trust in law enforcement.

Senate Bill 839 is a step toward establishing logical drug policy aimed at reducing deaths from drug-related overdose. Between 2000 and 2012, 4,182 people in Oregon died due to unintentional drug overdose (an average of 322 per year, or almost one a day). Oregon Veterans are also dying of unintentional and undetermined drug overdoses in increasing numbers: 198 males and 17 females between 2008 and 2012.<sup>1</sup> This bill could save hundreds of lives.

A person witnessing an overdose who acts to save a person's life should not be prosecuted for such efforts. Senate Bill 839 will allow for immediate action, the summoning of help without fear of repercussion, saving lives through the speedy response to an emergent medical situation. Our police and fire personnel are supposed to be our protectors. Putting our first responders into the role of the bad guy that handles the medical emergency and then looks to criminalize the situation helps to erode our society's trust of these public servants. One life saved by a change in public policy is a step in the right direction; I urge you to support Senate Bill 839.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://public.health.oregon.gov/DiseasesConditions/InjuryFatalityData/Documents/oregon-drug-overdose-report.pdf> 05/2014